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GROUNDWATER REPLENISHMENT SYSTEM CELEBRATES 15TH ANNIVERSARY

FOUNTAIN VALLEY, Calif. (January 18, 2023) – The world-renowned Groundwater Replenishment System (GWRS) celebrates its “crystal anniversary” this month, marking 15 years of doing what was once “unthinkable”—purifying wastewater into high-quality drinking water. A joint project of the Orange County Water District (OCWD; the District) and the Orange County Sanitation District (OC San), the GWRS made history when it came online in 2008, overcoming the stigma associated with these types of projects and bringing water reliability to Orange County.

“Today, we celebrate this remarkable achievement made possible by the unique, longstanding collaboration of our agencies along with the support of our local water retailers, and so many other stakeholders along the way,” said OCWD Board President Cathy Green. “This award-winning project provides local reliability to our region, decreases our dependence on imported water and serves as a model for the rest of the world.”

The GWRS takes highly treated wastewater and purifies it using a three-step advanced treatment process consisting of microfiltration, reverse osmosis, and ultraviolet light with hydrogen peroxide. The result is high-quality water that is pumped to recharge basins in Anaheim where it naturally percolates into the Orange County Groundwater Basin and becomes part of the drinking water supply for 2.5 million people in north and central Orange County. GWRS water is also sent to injection wells located along Orange County’s coast to create a seawater intrusion barrier that protects groundwater supplies. Over the years, GWRS water has become a primary source used to refill the basin and has allowed agencies served by OCWD to pump more water from the basin and become more locally sustainable.

The GWRS started producing 70 million gallons of water per day (MGD) in January 2008, increased production to 100 MGD after an expansion was completed in May 2015, and since inception has produced more than 400 billion gallons of water and counting. The GWRS 15th anniversary comes on the heels of another milestone for the state-of-the-art-facility: beginning the start-up and commissioning of its Final Expansion, where the GWRS will soon recycle 100 percent of OC San’s reclaimable flows, providing up to 130 MGD – enough to serve one million people daily.

As Board Chairman of OC San Chad P. Wanke said, “we are thrilled to commemorate 15 years of successful operation of the GWRS. The recent milestone of recycling 100 percent of our agency’s reclaimable flows provides critical water source stability for Orange County. This multi-agency

system is the world's largest water reuse facility and an example of what can be accomplished when agencies focus on the needs of those they serve.”

To commemorate the occasion, an educational campaign on social media was shared on the OCWD and OC San social media channels to inform the community about the facility and its benefits, and a [special anniversary video](#) was created. Also, a commemorative edition of bottled GWRS water will soon be unveiled, available for public consumption for individuals 18 and over under assembly bill 2022, which allows the limited bottling of advanced purified product water for educational purposes. OCWD and OC San were the first in the Western Hemisphere to bottle advanced purified water continuing its longstanding commitment to the education of water recycling.

For more information, OCWD invites the public to join a [virtual facility tour](#), watch an [on-demand tour video](#), or visit the [GWRS website](#).

The Orange County Water District is committed to enhancing Orange County's groundwater quality and reliability in an environmentally friendly and economical manner. The following cities rely on the groundwater basin, managed by OCWD, to provide 77% of their water demands: Anaheim, Buena Park, Costa Mesa, Cypress, Fountain Valley, Fullerton, Garden Grove, Huntington Beach, Irvine, La Palma, Los Alamitos, Newport Beach, Orange, Placentia, Santa Ana, Seal Beach, Stanton, Tustin, Villa Park, Westminster, and Yorba Linda. For more information about OCWD, please visit www.ocwd.com, like @OCWaterDistrict on Facebook, follow @OCWDWaterNews on Twitter, follow @OCWD on Instagram, and follow Orange County Water District on LinkedIn.

OC San is a public agency that provides wastewater collection, treatment, and recycling for approximately 2.6 million people in central and northwest Orange County. OC San is a special district that is governed by a 25-member Board of Directors composed of 20 cities, four special districts, and one representative from the Orange County Board of Supervisors. OC San has two operating facilities that treat wastewater from residential, commercial, and industrial sources. For more information on OC San please visit www.ocsan.gov. Follow @OCSanDistrict on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, and Orange County Sanitation District on LinkedIn.

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